

BEYOND CONSUMPTION

An Economic Perspective Based on  
Matthew 6:19-21, 6:24, and 6:25-34

A Professional Project

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the Faculty of the School of Theology  
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## ABSTRACT

In February, 1977, a conference entitled "Alternative Economics: What Can I Do Now?" was held at the School of Theology at Claremont, California. After attending most of the lectures which took place at that time, and listening to people such as Hazel Henderson and E.F. Schumacher, I came away convinced that a great economic era is rapidly coming to an end. Polluted air and water, diminishing supplies of energy, over-all inflation, high levels of unemployment, angry and frustrated workers and consumers -- all are signs of an impending crisis, a crisis which is demanding re-evaluation of those ideas and principles which underlie our contemporary economic systems.

In the Fall of 1977, I attended a class entitled "The Sermon on the Mount" which was taught by Dr. Hans Dieter Betz. It was here that I discovered three New Testament texts which seemed to address themselves quite clearly to the economic situation which was articulated at the February conference. These texts, Matthew 6:19-21, 6:24, and 6:25-34, struck me as presenting a unique and promising new perspective of our current understanding of human need and human work.

This project attempts to bring these New Testament texts into dialogue with present economic concepts of human

need and work. It begins with an analysis and interpretation of each text and ends with a discussion of the resulting conclusions and their implications for our own economic problems.

This project is not primarily directed toward the American public at large, but rather towards others like myself, Christian members and ministers who are concerned about the working out of their Christian faith in everyday human life, which necessarily includes spheres of economic behaviour such as human need and human work. In the present situation of impending economic crisis, what can be the perspective and role of the church and the individual Christian? That is the question this project attempts to answer.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

This project attempts to analyze and interpret three New Testament texts, Matthew 6:19-21, 6:24, and 6:25-34, and then endeavors to bring that message, and its implications, into a direct encounter with some of our present understandings and systems of economics.

The importance of this project is largely based upon my personal conviction that we are now entering a period of serious economic crisis, both in this country and in the world as a whole. The indications that we have reached the end of an economic era are now too many to ignore -- resource depletion, energy depletion, pollution, inflation, and unemployment are but a few.

Obviously, the result of such a crisis is a pressing need to "reconceptualize our economy."<sup>1</sup> We need to look again at the ideas, principles, and values which underly our present economy, and we need to determine their viability for what we consider to be the actualities

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<sup>1</sup>Hazel Henderson, "Value Roots for Economic Alternatives," address delivered at School of Theology at Claremont, California, February 25, 1977 (tape #871a on file in School of Theology Library)

and goals of our human existence.

Economics is one of the most basic of the fields of human study, in-so-far as its subject matter deals so directly with everyday, human life. Its two major concerns: human need and human work, are two of most important concerns of human existence.

Hence it is imperative that the church and its members enter into the present spirit of economic re-evaluation. We not only have a tremendous stake in its outcome -- we also have an exceedingly rich heritage of the understanding of human need and work within our history and within our biblical traditions. We have a responsibility to share that tradition. For this reason, I have chosen, for my project, to examine three biblical texts which I hope will prove fruitful in the struggle to understand human economic behaviour.

Although I have noticed the recent emergence of several books which attempt to deal with the contemporary environmental and economic crisis from a Christian or humanitarian point of view (and, I might add, I have found them very helpful in my own research), I have come across no one who has approached the problem as I have, namely by beginning with the biblical text first and allowing its message to confront and inform the issues. Those few authors who refer to biblical traditions, usually do so

only as a means of latching on to an "authority" to support their positions and are often guilty of horrible mutilation of the intended messages within the texts to which they refer. On the other hand, I have noticed that those biblical scholars who do treat the text honestly, and with the respect it deserves, tend to become so wrapped up in its original message that they either forget or are reluctant to reflect about how that message confronts and informs us today. In this project I have endeavored to take that second step with the three texts I analyze.

In essence, my methodology can be summed up in one word: hermeneutics. According to Doty, hermeneutics is primarily understood in terms of principles and theory of the interpretation of literary and historical texts.<sup>2</sup> But hermeneutics is not something which is strictly limited to the examination of literary and historical texts. To a great extent, life itself is involved in the hermeneutic process, the process of interpretation.<sup>3</sup> All that my eyes see, my ears hear, and my fingers touch, I interpret. Communication between human beings is totally impossible apart from interpretation.

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<sup>2</sup>William G. Doty, Contemporary New Testament Interpretation (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1972), pp. 167-168

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 3

Moreover, the power thus wielded by the interpreter is tremendous.<sup>4</sup> An error in interpretation can be disastrous. For example, a friend of a friend of mine had a plain gold bracelot which had once belonged to her grandmother. Disliking its plainness, but wanting very much to wear the bracelot because of its sentimental value, Nancy went to a jewelry store and asked that her name be engraved on the bracelot along with some kind of ornamental design. The clerk said that it could be done, and wrote the following note to the person who was to do the engraving: "dress up -- Nancy". Unfortunately, the engraver misinterpreted the note, because when Nancy came back a few days later to pick up her bracelot she found no ornamental design and only plain lettering, which read, "Dress up, Nancy."

The importance of care in interpretation is no less when dealing with literary and historical texts. Here it should be noted that the most common mistake made in any kind of hermeneutic endeavor, and especially the hermeneutic examination of literary and historical texts, is the error of inserting one's own experience in place of what is being communicated by the other. Put more simply, it's a matter of not seeing or hearing or feeling what the other

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

is trying to tell me, and seeing instead only what I want to see. The primary mood of the hermeneutic process is never, until the very end, that of statement. It is always that of question. What is being expressed here? What is being revealed to me? These questions must be asked again and again very carefully and very sincerely, before I am ready to make any statements or conclusions.

This, of course, alludes to the extreme difficulty of the hermeneutic process. Thus, when I interpret a text, even though I must be careful not to interject my own experience in place of what is being communicated to me, nevertheless it is a fact that interpretation is also impossible if I have no experience in common with the person who is attempting to communicate. Communication is impossible between two beings who have nothing in common. Hence, the further apart two cultures are, the more difficult is the hermeneutic process. This is a constant problem in dealing with historical texts: "What points of contact exist between contemporary men and texts of the past?"<sup>5</sup>

Of course, this problem is particularly severe in dealing with New Testament texts. In this project, I will be dealing with texts which are 1900 years old. Hence I

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

have tried to examine them extremely carefully and have tried to exhibit the same care in presenting my conclusions. Regretably, such meticulous attention to detail must necessarily result in what will seem like very tedious reading to the non-New Testament scholar. My hope is that such will be preferred to slipshod exegesis and that for those interested in New Testament exegesis my analysis will prove to be more stimulating than boring. Obviously, I am convinced that there are significant similarities between contemporary human existence and the understandings of human existence presented in my three texts, and that these latter understandings can do much to illuminate some of our present economic principles and systems.

I have chosen to present my material in four chapters. The first three chapters attempt to analyze and extract the message being communicated in my three texts: Matthew 6:19-21, 6:24, and 6:25-34. Each of these first three chapters is divided into four sections. First, I have presented my own translation of the text from the original Greek. Second, I have attempted to analyze the structure of the text, using the disciplines of source criticism and form criticism, relying heavily upon Bultmann's History of the Synoptic Tradition and class

notes from lectures by Professor Hans Dieter Betz.<sup>6</sup> Third, I have taken those words which seem most crucial to the text and have looked very closely at how they were used and understood in antiquity. Here I have depended upon not only the various commentaries, but particularly upon Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.<sup>7</sup> Finally, at the end of each chapter I have presented my conclusions as to just exactly what I think the text is trying to say. Then, my final chapter is concerned with bringing that message and its implications into dialogue with our contemporary economic system, capitalism, and its underlying values and principles.

However, before continuing on with my examinations of the individual texts, a word or two must be said concerning their inclusion within a larger whole. All three of the texts which I have chosen for this project come from the Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew 5:3-7:27. Essentially, this document consists of a series of originally independent sayings which have at some time been joined together and attributed to Jesus in the form of a sermon.

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<sup>6</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition (New York: Harper & Row, 1968)

Hans Dieter Betz, lectures, School of Theology at Claremont, Fall, 1977

<sup>7</sup>Gerhard Kittel, (ed.), Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964)

The origin of the Sermon on the Mount is today a subject of controversy among New Testament scholars.

Much of the confusion results from the fact that Luke seems to have his own version of the Sermon, often called the Sermon on the Plain, in Luke 6:17-49. This has led many scholars, including Jeremias, to believe that the Sermon on the Mount was originally part of that document called "Q" which was available to and used by both Matthew and Luke.<sup>8</sup> Betz, however, has argued convincingly that the Sermon on the Mount originally existed "in toto" on its own, alongside "Q", and shared several of the traditions of "Q".<sup>9</sup>

At any rate, the content of the Sermon on the Mount indicates that it is one of the oldest Christian documents we have. It comes from a Christian sect which has not yet split away from Judaism, but which is under severe attack from various Jewish factions. This particular Jewish-Christian sect is aware of the existence of Gentile Christianity, but it is obvious in the Sermon on the Mount that its attitude toward this other movement is primarily one of hostility rather than brotherhood. Betz dates its existence as prior to 70 A.D. and conjectures its location

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<sup>8</sup>Joachim Jeremias, The Sermon on the Mount (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 15

<sup>9</sup>Betz, lecture

as probably being Jerusalem.<sup>10</sup>

Betz divides the Sermon on the Mount structurally into four main parts: 1) an exordium, establishing the premises on which the rest of the document is based (5:3-16), 2) the main section, consisting of instruction about "the way to life" (5:17-7:12), 3) a series of eschatological warnings (7:13-23), and 4) the epilogue (7:24-27). He sub-divides the main section of teaching into three subsections: 1) the interpretation of the Torah (5:17-48), 2) the practice of the cult (6:1-18), and 3) the conduct of daily life (6:19-7:12).<sup>11</sup> The three texts I have chosen for this project come from this last subsection, and consequently we may assume that they were originally intended to be part of a collection of principles and exhortations intended to teach and illuminate members of a community concerning the conduct of daily life, a Jewish-Christian community in the early first century A.D., probably living in Jerusalem. Now we must turn to the texts themselves.

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<sup>10</sup>Betz, lecture

<sup>11</sup>Hans Dieter Betz, written outline of the Sermon on the Mount, presented to class, School of Theology at Claremont, Fall, 1977

## Chapter 2

## MATTHEW 6:19-21

## MY TRANSLATION

<sup>19</sup>Do not store up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where the moth and the eater destroy, and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup>but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither the moth nor the eater destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal; <sup>21</sup>for where your treasure is, there will be also your heart.

## FORM AND SOURCE-CRITICAL ANALYSIS

This section begins with what is clearly a negative ethical admonition: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures upon the earth." This exhortation is then followed by two underlying principles or illustrations, both of which are introduced by the word "ὅπου" (where). The first principle is a proverb illustrating the natural impermanence of the earth: "where the moth and the eater destroy." The second refers to earthly susceptibility to human imperfection, to human crime: "and where thieves break in and steal."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hans Dieter Betz, "Analysis Hand-out on Matthew 6:19-7:12" (presented to BS 370 class, School of Theology at Claremont)

Next follows a second ethical admonition, this one positive and a parallel of the first, hence offering an alternative behaviour to that which has just been condemned: "but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven." This exhortation, also, is followed by two underlying principles or illustrations, which in turn directly parallel the previous two, the only difference being the insertion of negatives. The first illustrates heaven's permanence: "where neither the moth nor the eater destroy." The second refers to heaven's lack of susceptibility to human crime: "and where thieves do not break in and steal."<sup>2</sup>

Finally, the section is completed by an ethical principle which seems to be connected to the previous material by the catchwords "ὅπου" (where) and "θησαυρός" (treasure): "for where your treasure is, there will be also your heart." The use of the word "γάρ" (for) and the fact that this principle ends the section might very well indicate that it is the over-all reason or basis for the preceding exhortations and illustrations.<sup>3</sup>

Many commentaries have pointed out the poetic character of this section. It has a rhythm and balance very conducive to memorization, and hence is highly

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.      <sup>3</sup>Ibid.

suggestive of an early oral saying. There are two parallel strophes, each consisting of three three-beat lines, followed by a four-beat line. It is quite possible that originally the two parallel strophes existed separately from the final four-beat line. The rhythmic nature of the first two strophes is enhanced by the fact that a clause ("where the moth and the eater destroy") with two nouns and one verb is followed by a clause ("and where thieves break in and steal") with one noun and two verbs.<sup>4</sup>

Luke also has a version of this section: Luke 12:33-34. Instead of general exhortation or general ethical principle, he begins his version with a very specific exhortation towards almsgiving. The relationship between Matthew and Luke is highly problematic. Whereas there is very little agreement in wording between Matthew 6:19-20 and Luke 12:33, Matthew 6:21 and Luke 12:34 are almost identical. There is no convincing evidence as to which version is the more original. Luke's is shorter and more specific. Matthew's is longer, more general, and more

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.; Rudolf Bultmann, History of the Synoptic Tradition (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 84; David Hill, The Gospel of Matthew (Greenwood, SC: Attic Press, 1972), p. 141; T.W. Manson, The Sayings of Jesus (London: SCM Press, 1949), p. 172; Robert C. Tannehill, The Sword of His Mouth (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 48.

poetically balanced.<sup>5</sup>

#### TERMINOLOGY

"θησαυρός -- ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς" (treasure -- upon the earth)

The word "treasure" was used within antiquity in much the same way that we use it in the twentieth century. Treasure is a possession, a very valuable possession; something to be held on to at all costs. If not owned, treasure is that which is sought after at all costs. Because of its value, if treasure is owned it must be protected, or hidden from others. Therefore it is quite often buried, or stored in a strong box or vault. Today of course, we put it in a bank. Here it is interesting to note that the same Greek word for treasure, "θησαυρός", can also be used to mean "treasure chest" or "storehouse". Treasure is usually thought of as a luxury rather than a necessity of life. Hence it is not used up, but is stored or deposited; it is hoarded. In-so-far as specific items which were treasured in antiquity, the most valuable were considered to be gold and silver. Other treasures included money, various temple artifacts, precious stones, spices,

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<sup>5</sup>Hill, p. 141; Wilfred L. Knox, The Sources of the Synoptic Gospels (London: Cambridge University Press, 1957), II. 27-28

grain, wine, livestock, rugs, drapes, and expensive clothing.<sup>6</sup>

Alongside this literal definition, "treasure" was often used by the Hebrew people for a variety of symbolic purposes. Old Testament literature sometimes depicts wisdom and the fear of God as hidden treasure (Proverbs 2:4 and Isaiah 33:6). Sometimes Israel herself is said to be the treasure of God (Exodus 19:5 and Psalms 135:4). Finally, there existed within Israel the concept of God's heavenly storehouse, from which he dispenses treasures upon the earth (Jeremiah 51:16 and Job 38:22).<sup>7</sup>

None of these symbolic definitions, however, are of any help in understanding the text with which we are dealing. Here we must assume that a more literal use of the word is intended. At the same time, though, it must be admitted that the word is used in a general, rather than specific, manner. In other words, "treasure" is used here to mean a very earthly, material possession, but no single such possession is specified.

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<sup>6</sup>C.U. Wolf, "Treasure," in Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), IV. 693-695; Hill, p. 141; Friedrich Hauck, "θησαυρός," in Gerhard Kittel (ed.) Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), III., 136-138; Chayim Cohen, "Treasure," in Encyclopedia Judaica (New York: Macmillan, 1972), XV., 1360-1362

<sup>7</sup>Wolf, IV., 693-695; Hauck, III., 136-138

"βρῶνς " (the eater)

Although this word means literally "the eater," it can be variously used to mean rust, the grasshopper, or the worm. Any of them would work. If rust is intended, then the proverb would suggest the destruction of metal treasures. The worm and grasshopper would probably suggest the destruction of treasures in the form of grain. "βρῶνς " is preceded by "νῆς " (the moth), the enemy of fabric and cloth treasures.<sup>8</sup>

Of course, such a literal understanding is not crucial to this particular phrase (where the moth and the eater destroy), since its purpose is that of a more general, proverbial principle, intended to illustrate the natural impermanence of treasures stored upon the earth.

"δικορῶνς " (break in)

Most commentaries point out that this word, "breaking in," would be more literally understood in terms of "digging through," ie. thieves often used a trowel to bore through the clay walls of one's home.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Hill, p. 141; H. Benedict Green, The Gospel According to Matthew (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 92; Manson, p. 173; Eduard Schweizer, The Good News According to Matthew (London: S.P.C.K., 1976), p. 162

<sup>9</sup>Hill, p. 141; Schweizer, p. 162

Again, however, the phrase in which it is used (and when thieves break in and steal) has a general, proverbial intention, referring to the susceptibility of earthly treasures to human crime.

"θησαυρὸς -- ἐν οὐρανῷ" (treasure -- in heaven)

Hauck has pointed out that in later Judaism it became common to regard good works, almsgiving in particular, as treasure stored with God in heaven. Hauck describes it as working something along the order of making a loan. Thus, whereas the interest on such treasure might result in immediate benefits for the righteous almsgiver, the capital yet remained in heaven until the day of judgement, at which time he would be paid back. Upon death, the Jews believed that all souls would go to heaven. Once there, they would be separated. The righteous souls, who had stored up treasure in heaven, would be admitted into God's "treasure house of eternal life." There they are preserved by God and "bound in the bundle of the living." The souls of the unrighteous, who had failed to store up treasure in heaven, were rejected.<sup>10</sup>

The Jewish Apocalyptic and Rabbinic literature, as well as the New Testament itself, contains several

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<sup>10</sup>Hauck, III., 136-138

references to this particular use of the word treasure. Two passages from the Apocalypse of Baruch (part of the Jewish Pseudepigrapha) reveal a correlation between works of righteousness and the storing up of treasures in heaven.

Apocalypse of Baruch 14:12

For the righteous justly hope for the end, and without fear depart from this habitation, because they have with Thee a store of good works preserved in treasuries. (Charles)

Apocalypse of Baruch 24:1

For behold! the days come and the books shall be opened in which are written the sins of all those who have sinned, and again also the treasuries in which the righteousness of all those who have been righteous in creation is gathered. (Charles)

In Ecclesiasticus (part of the Jewish Apocrypha) we find a passage correlating almsgiving in particular with the storing up of treasures in heaven.

Ecclesiasticus 29:11-13

Store up for yourself the treasure which the Most High has commanded,  
and it will benefit you more than gold.  
Let almsgiving be the treasure in your strong-room,  
and it will rescue you from every misfortune.  
It will arm you against the enemy  
better than stout shield or strong spear. (NEB)

In addition, the New Testament itself contains similar passages which define the storing up of heavenly treasures in terms of almsgiving. The first of these is the Lukan parallel to Matthew 6:19-20, and the second is from Mark.

Luke 12:33

Sell your possessions, and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. (RSV)

Mark 10:21

And Jesus looking upon him, and said to him, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." (RSV)

Here is a good place to note that in later Judaism it was not uncommon to contrast this heavenly treasure with attempts to store up earthly treasure. In the passages just quoted, heavenly treasure is said to be of greater benefit than gold, shield or spear (Ecclesiasticus 29:11-13); and is compared with the impermanence of earthly purses (Luke 12:33). This contrast is carried further in excerpts from the Rabbinic literature and the New Testament letter of James.

Baba bathra 11a

My fathers stored in a place which can be tampered with, but I have stored in a place which cannot be tampered with.

James 5:1-3

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up your treasure for the last days. (RSV)

"καρδία" (the heart)

The New Testament uses the word "heart" in much the same way that it is used in the Old Testament and by Rabbinic Judaism. Hence "heart" most often means much more than its literal, physical definition. According to Jewish psychology, the heart is understood as the center of one's

very personhood. It is "the center of the inner life of man and the source or seat of all the forces and functions of soul and spirit."<sup>11</sup> The heart is the source of all of one's emotions, feelings, desires, thoughts, and reflections. Most importantly, for the Jew, the heart is the seat of the will, the center of a person's moral conduct, from which he turns toward, or away from, God.<sup>12</sup>

### INTERPRETATION

Despite the fact that form and source-critical analysis of Matthew 6:19-21 reveals the probability that vv. 19 and 20 existed originally as a very carefully constructed, well-balanced poem, to which v. 21 was later added, I nevertheless choose to begin my interpretation with v. 21. I do so because I am convinced that v. 21 is a very perceptive and important insight into human anthropology and psychology, and is an insight which underlies the poetry of vv. 19-20, whether expressed or not. As such it is an understanding with which we must come to grips before we can study the rest of the pericope, vv. 19-20.

Verse 21 communicates an understanding of human existence which was very central to Judaism. For the Jew,

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<sup>11</sup>Johannes Behm, "καρδία," in Kittel, III., 611

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., III., 605-613

human existence is not something which is complete and perfect and whole in and of itself. Rather, human existence is a very tenuous thing, a thing which is wrought with insecurity and anxiety. A very real and important issue for the Jew is the problem of security, of the meaning of life, and its source and acquisition. It is this sense of security and meaning which is intended by the use of the metaphor "your treasure" in v. 21. For anxious human beings, no treasure is more sought after than that treasure of completeness, perfection, security. Furthermore, if human beings were not incomplete and anxious, there would be no need for treasure. That, of course, is the message of many oriental religions and contemporary psychologists who claim that human perfection and completion and tranquility is found by looking, not outside the person, but within. Hence, looking for treasure is deemed foolish. For the Hebrew that is not so. Human selfhood ultimately receives its meaning not from within itself, but from a greater power which exists outside the self. Hence, the heart, the human self in its full sense of intellectual, emotional, willfull, moral, and religious being, is constantly reaching and stretching towards this other, this treasure, for meaning and security.

Furthermore, v. 21 even goes so far as to indicate that so important is this treasure which is sought after,

that it actually defines and describes the self. "For where your treasure is, there will be also your heart." Implied here, of course, is the extreme importance of the location of one's treasure. It determines where he/she will be.

This anthropological understanding underlies the two exhortations of vv. 19 and 20. If your treasure is located on earth and stored there, there also will be your heart, your self. Such treasure, and consequently such selfhood, is illustrated metaphorically as being doomed to natural forces of destruction (in terms of selfhood the implication here must be that of death) and to the imperfection and crime of other human beings.

On the other hand, if your treasure is located and stored in heaven, there also will be your self. At the day of judgement, the self will be admitted into God's "treasure house of eternal life" and "bound in the bundle of the living." Such treasure, and consequently such selfhood, is metaphorically illustrated as being neither doomed to the natural forces of destruction, nor to the imperfection and crime of other human beings.

At this point a difficult problem arises for myself and, I would suspect, for most modern readers. The idea of heaven as a place located above the earth where my works of righteousness here upon the earth are tabulated and kept as a kind of capital which will be paid back to me after death

at a judgement day is a myth which I cannot accept at literal or face value. For this latter exhortation to have any meaning at all for me it must be demythologized. Otherwise, I must simply reject it and be left with only the first exhortation, and hence with an existence characterized by insecurity, meaninglessness, and hopelessness, an existence without a treasure to reach for.

We must re-examine this concept of heaven. Can heaven be understood in terms other than as a place above the earth, a place to which persons go after death? Is there an alternative to this unacceptable myth for an individual living in a modern age of science and technology?

I am convinced that there is, that whereas much of this myth of heaven is objectionable to the modern human being, there lies beneath it an understanding of the world, of history, and of human existence which is acceptable, perceptive, meaningful, and extremely good news for us in the 20th century.

First of all, we modern Christians must understand that heaven was the myth through which first century Christians attempted to articulate and describe human fulfillment and completion. This implies most directly a human desire for fulfillment. Secondly, the fact that heaven is placed above the earth and is reached only after death implies a confession of human frailty, a confession

of human inability to attain perfection alone, a dependence for meaning upon some other power outside the self. We need God. Thirdly, the very existence of heaven itself implies a burning hope and faith that this other power, God, does exist and that it can offer our lives meaning and security. Fourthly, v. 20 of our pericope implies the belief that this power is permanent and insurmountable, that it offers us a treasure of meaningful existence which is susceptible to neither natural decay or human imperfection and crime. Finally, the exhortation to store up treasures in heaven implies the belief that our acts upon earth are somehow intimately related to this other power, that God, upon whom we depend, has a will for us to fulfill upon the earth. In fact, the implication is that our lives are meaningful only in-so-far as we remain open and responsive to that will.

These implications which underlie the myth of heaven, and not the literal myth itself, enable me to hear and understand and accept the exhortation in v. 20 as good news: "but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither the moth nor the eater destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."

Yet there remains still another problem which must be dealt with, namely, the definition of the specific human activity which is involved in "storing up treasures in heaven," and whether such activity is a subtle form of

works-righteousness, aimed at earning or meriting the meaning and security given by God.

Unfortunately, the author of our text does not specify the human behaviour involved in "storing up treasures in heaven." We have already seen that parallels in both Jewish and Christian literature usually equate such storing up of treasure with works of righteousness and often more specifically with almsgiving, but we cannot be sure that this is intended here. The storing up of treasures in heaven is simply not defined, the author seemingly assuming that the audience knows what is intended. For the compiler and composer of the Sermon on the Mount, who chose to include this pericope, the activity involved is righteousness, a righteousness which "exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees" (Mt. 5:20). Such righteousness is the subject of the entire text of the Sermon on the Mount, and to attempt to describe it here would be too great a task. Generally, however, such righteousness seems to involve selfless acts aimed at doing God's will, and at imitating God's own acts upon the earth. Such acts are intended by the phrase, "storing up treasures in heaven."

Still, it must be asked whether these acts are done in order to merit God's grace. If so, then we have here an exhortation which smacks of "works-righteousness" and which is therefore unacceptable to post-Pauline, post-Reformation church. If so, then we have here an exhortation which

reeks of an arrogant pietism which cannot be accepted by any who believe in a grace and forgiveness freely given by God to all.

The issue is whether v. 20 exhorts Christians to earn the grace of God by "storing up treasures in heaven" or whether such activity is understood in terms of participation in the grace event. At this point, the text is not clear. But for myself, the latter is the only tolerable interpretation.

Whereas grace is not something which I can earn through pietistic obedience to God, it is likewise not present in me apart from my participation in it. As Bonhoeffer has shown, grace is not cheap, but is very costly.<sup>13</sup> God's grace is not that which says, "Of course you have sinned, but now everything is forgiven, so you can stay where you are and enjoy the consolations of forgiveness."<sup>14</sup> Rather, God's grace is a grace which calls persons to leave their nets and their homes and follow Christ.

Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship (New York: Macmillan, 1976), pp. 45-60

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 51      <sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 47

In terms of v. 20, "storing up treasures in heaven" is not works-righteousness, but is an example of costly grace. Faith believes in a God who not only forgives our shortcomings, but who also offers us the opportunity for meaningful participation in the world and in history. In-so-far as we surrender our wills to His and "store up treasures in heaven" we are assured of a meaningful existence susceptible to neither earthly decay or human fallibility.

In conclusion, Matthew 6:19-21 is not drippy, sentimental, pietism. It represents a very hard-nosed understanding of reality. As human beings we are driven to look outside ourselves for security and fulfillment. Where we choose to look determines who we are. If our treasures be the things of the earth, our existence is characterized by insecurity and paranoia. Existence is secure and meaningful only if its treasure is in heaven, in God's hands, in the fulfillment of God's will, and hence ultimately, in the willful surrender of our own will to his -- righteousness.

## Chapter 3

## MATTHEW 6:24

## MY TRANSLATION

<sup>24</sup>No one can be a slave to two masters; for he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot be a slave to God and mammon.

## FORM AND SOURCE-CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Matthew 6:24 is in the form of an ethical principle and is presented as a personal formulation of Jesus, depicting Jesus as a "teacher of wisdom."<sup>1</sup> As such, it is similar to the section just discussed, Matthew 6:19-21.

This section begins with a social proverb: "No one can be a slave to two masters," which is totally social in nature and devoid of any theological commentary whatsoever. Probably this proverb was well-known in Jewish circles and may have been applied in many different ways, as proverbs often are. Betz states that it was used extensively in the Jewish tradition, most often to list those who in fact do have two masters and to prohibit them from entering the

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<sup>1</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, History of the Synoptic Tradition (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 75.

temple.<sup>2</sup> Here, of course, the proverb has a much different application.

Immediately following the proverb are two social observations, which seem to be presented as proof, or reasons for the existence of the proverb just stated: "for he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other."<sup>3</sup> Again, we have social and psychological, not theological, commentary. These two proofs are presented in the form of antithetical parallelismus membrorum and chiasmus, two literary devices quite commonly used in the various literary traditions of antiquity.<sup>4</sup> Soulen claims that parallelismus membrorum is a formal characteristic of Hebrew poetry and that antithetic parallelismus membrorum is frequently found within the Jewish Wisdom literature.<sup>5</sup> Parallelismus membrorum is a couplet in which a truth or idea is stated twice with

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<sup>2</sup>Statement by Hans Dieter Betz, in class lecture, School of theology at Claremont, November 22, 1977.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.; Hans Dieter Betz, written analysis of Sermon on the Mount, presented to class, School of Theology at Claremont, Fall, 1977.

<sup>4</sup>Betz, lecture; Betz, written analysis.

<sup>5</sup>Richard N. Soulen, Handbook of Biblical Criticism (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1976), p. 124.

different terms.<sup>6</sup> Antithetic parallelismus membrorum occurs when the second line of the couplet "is posed as a contrast to the first."<sup>7</sup> In our case, the master who is hated in the first line is the object of devotion in the second; the master who is loved in the first line is despised in the second. Chiasmus has to do with a particular sequence in which parallel words or lines are used and is a common poetic device. A chiastic sequence would be a-b-b-a, and that is what we have here:<sup>8</sup>

a-hate  
b-love  
b-be devoted  
a-despise

Finally, the section is ended by a new principle: "You cannot be a slave to God and mammon." This last principle is interesting in that there is a sudden shift from third person to the second person "you," as well as a shift from social proverb to theological principle.<sup>9</sup> Here at the end of this section the secular proverb which began the section has been transformed into a theological insight. These two fairly dramatic shifts, plus Betz's

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<sup>6</sup>Betz, lecture; Soulen, p. 124.

<sup>7</sup>Soulen, p. 124.

<sup>8</sup>Betz, lecture; Soulen, p. 34.

<sup>9</sup>Bultmann, p. 87; Betz, lecture; Betz, written analysis.

assertion of the separate existence of the first principle in much of the Jewish tradition, would seem to indicate that this last principle is secondary to the preceding principle and its proofs. However, there is no way of discerning whether its origin lies in Judaism, in the early church, or Jesus himself. We can only say that at some point a very secular and common social proverb within the Jewish tradition was transformed into a theological principle and found its way into the early Christian traditions, eventually settling down into both "the Sermon on the Mount" and "Q", and was attributed to Jesus in the form of a personal formulation.

Interestingly enough, Luke 16:13, the "Q" version of this principle, is identical to Matthew 6:24, except that Luke's first principle includes the word "οἰκέτης" (slave) and reads, "No slave can be a slave to two masters." The addition, however, is insignificant, and I would hesitate to accept Schweizer's argument that the "οἰκέτης" has been purposely dropped from the version in Matthew in order to make the statement more universally applicable.<sup>10</sup> The shift in emphasis is only very slight and one would expect that "δοῦλεύειν" (be a slave to)

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<sup>10</sup> Eduard Schweizer, The Good News According to Matthew (London: S.P.C.K., 1976), p. 163.

would have been changed or eliminated in favor of another word if "οἰκέτης" had in fact been deliberately dropped.

#### TERMINOLOGY

##### "δοῦλος " (slave)

Rengstorf defines the slave as one who performs a "service which is not a matter of choice for the one who renders it, which he has to perform whether he likes it or not, because he is subject as a slave to an alien will, to the will of his owner."<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, slavery in antiquity was not only a condition in which the slave was forced to do the will of the master. The slave is also characterized by dependence upon the master for food and shelter and the necessities of life. "δοῦλος " especially stresses this dependence in contrast to "οἰκέτης ," the nearly synonymous word in Luke's version which puts more emphasis upon the social position of the slave. In "δοῦλος ," there is a strong passive element.<sup>12</sup>

Slavery, of course, was quite common in antiquity, both in Imperial Rome and the earlier Hellenistic world.

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<sup>11</sup>Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, "δοῦλος ," in Gerhard Kittel (ed.) Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), II., 261.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., II., 261

Slaves were usually prisoners of war who became the absolute property of their captors. It was not surprising to find slaves of considerable education and culture, and in some cases the condition of slavery was even preferred to freedom, since the slave was dependent upon the lord for food and shelter for him/herself and his/her family.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, slavery was and is a deplorable social institution and contemporary efforts of humankind to eliminate it from the face of the earth are to be commended. Any institution which allows human beings to be treated as property by other human beings, like cattle or chickens, is unacceptable to a people who extol such virtues as democracy and freedom. Hence it comes as no surprise that, although the institution of slavery was rather commonplace in antiquity, it was greatly loathed by most of the Greek philosophers, for whom, of course, freedom was so greatly important. For practically all of the Greek philosophers -- the sophists, Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus, and the Stoics, the condition of slavery is the very opposite of freedom and is hence to be avoided at all costs. The slave has no right of personal choice. The slave must do what someone else wants him/her to do, and must refrain from doing what someone else does not want

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<sup>13</sup>W. Albright and C.S. Mann, Matthew (Garden City: Doubleday, 1971), p. 81.

him/her to do. This Greek disdain for slavery is evident in their scorn for barbarians in general and especially the Persians because of their subjection to despots in contrast to the Greek's own love of democracy. In terms of Greek religion there is no mention of slavery as a metaphor or expression for one's relationship to God. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that within Greek religious ritual there is no place for kneeling, the traditional attitude of the slave before the lord.<sup>14</sup>

For the Hebrew, however, slavery is understood in an entirely different way. Whereas the Greek desires to avoid slavery like the plague, the Hebrew maintains that there is no avoidance of slavery; in fact, the social institution of slavery provides the Jew with a very useful metaphor for human existence itself. For the Hebrew the question is not whether or not one is a slave. Rather, the question is to whom or to what one is enslaved. Whereas for the Greek a human life, unspoiled and free, is an end in itself, the Jew is convinced that the human life is subordinate to and governed by a higher authority; it is not an end in itself. To be human is to be a slave. To be human is to be dependent upon some other for life and meaning. To be human is to find life and meaning only by

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<sup>14</sup>Rengstorf, II., 261-265.

serving another; only by subjecting one's own will to that of one's lord.<sup>15</sup>

Hence, the issue is whom or what your lord is. The Jews commonly use the term "slave" to distinguish themselves from the ungodly, those who are "slaves of Baal" or "slaves of other gods." Jewish heroes are often called "slaves of Yahweh." For the Hebrew, to be called a "slave of Yahweh" is to express at one and the same time both one's complete dependence upon God and one's acknowledgement of God's claim upon oneself.<sup>16</sup>

Of course, this image of slavery as a metaphor for the relationship between the Jew and God must not be absolutized. Hebrew literature contains many other images of this relationship which are every bit as rich and perceptive in their theological understanding. I must acknowledge that the text is here describing only one part of that exceedingly complex relationship which exists between human beings and God.

"μαμωνα" (mammon)

The Greek word, "μαμωνα" has as its root an Aramaic word which means, in a literal sense, "that in which one trusts."<sup>17</sup> In a more general sense, the word is

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<sup>15</sup>Betz, lecture.      <sup>16</sup>Rengstorff, II., 267-268.

<sup>17</sup>Frieffrich Hauck, "μαμωνα," in Kittel, IV., 388.

most often used in the Rabbinic literature (in the Targum and the Babylonian Talmud -- curiously enough, the word does not occur in the Old Testament) to designate wealth or property. Anything of value could be considered mammon, including material possessions, money, and slaves, and such mammon could be recognized from a completely neutral, objective perspective, without any ethical or moral objection and with no sense of the incompatibility of mammon and God.<sup>18</sup>

Gradually however, the word "mammon" seems to have lost its moral neutrality, and we find in antiquity an increasing skepticism toward wealth and property. We find in the literature of antiquity (in Judaism, from Qumran, in the Wisdom literature, and in Greek philosophy) an increasing recognition and respect for the tremendous power of wealth, not only in terms of the ability of the rich to force their influence upon others, but wealth as a tremendously powerful psychological force which effects the poor, the rich, and the middle-class alike. Mammon became less a neutral designation of wealth, and more the name for that demonic force which enslaves people to an all-encompassing

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid.; Betz, lecture; Schweizer, p. 164; Matthew Black, An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 139; David Hill, The Gospel of Matthew (Greenwood, SC: Attic Press, 1972), p. 143.

desire for possessions and riches. As such, it is anti-Godly and sinful and Hauck concludes that within Judaism, mammon typically "has an ignoble sense and is used in censure."<sup>19</sup>

### INTERPRETATION

First of all, it must be pointed out that the issue which is dealt with in Matthew 6:24 is not the goodness or badness of the social institution of slavery, in which one human being is owned by another. Rather, slavery is here used as a metaphor for human existence in general.

However, the fact that it is slavery that is chosen as a metaphor for human existence must not be taken lightly. We have already seen in the previous section (Matthew 6:19-21) that for the Jew, human life is not something which is perfect and complete in and of itself. The human being is ultimately dependent upon some other outside the self for security and meaning. Any notion of complete freedom is folly to the Jew and to the early Christian as well. Human existence is characterized by slavery, dependence upon and servitude toward some other which is greater than ourselves.

The problem is that human existence finds itself

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<sup>19</sup>Hauck, IV., 389; Hill, p. 143; Betz, lecture.

confronted by more than one lord. One or the other must be served, or both. The possibility that both may be served is rejected. Human life is characterized in terms of either-or, not both-and. Human life is characterized as a decision-making process, as a continual need to make choices between alternatives which are incompatible to one another.

The ultimate choice is of course whether one chooses to enslave oneself to God or to the being or force which opposes God. The final principle which is asserted in 6:24 is that one cannot be a slave to both. Either you are for God or against Him. This is the issue being dealt with in Matthew 6:24.

At this point it is interesting to note that the passage does not say, "You cannot be a slave to God and the devil." Rather, the original author has chosen to call the devil "mammon." To equate "mammon" with the devil (using devil to mean that force which is opposed to God) is to acknowledge the demonic power of human desire for wealth. Contrary to those who would believe that they are made more free through the acquisition of possessions, it is asserted here that such acquisition usually becomes a form of slavery for the individual. One searches for security and meaning in possessions and when such is not forthcoming the typical reaction is to immediately strive to acquire more or different possessions. One's whole life becomes

controlled and dedicated to the foolish accumulation of wealth. One becomes a slave of mammon. And in becoming a slave of mammon, it is no longer possible to be a slave of God: "You cannot be a slave to God and mammon."

Betz has suggested that such a conclusion must result invariably in two alternative kinds of economic responses, both of which are found in antiquity.<sup>20</sup>

One response is that of asceticism, complete abstention from wealth or money. This response was that of the Jewish sect at Qumran who despised wealth, refused to touch money, and turned their possessions into a common fund. The Cynics of Greek philosophy likewise regarded wealth and possessions as beneath their notice and unworthy of any consideration or interest.

Early Christianity, however, chose another response. Understanding that although wealth is fraught with the dangerous possibility of becoming demonic, the early church nevertheless realized that wealth is not inherently demonic. Consequently the church chose to attempt to de-demonise wealth, to use wealth in a useful way. Despite wealth's potential for evil, its potential to make human beings its slaves, the church realized that for the human being who is truly a slave of God, wealth

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<sup>20</sup>Betz, lecture.

could not be lord, and could be made useful; it could be used as a tool by the one who is God's slave. Hence, to be God's slave is not to shun wealth but to exorcise it, to drive from it those demons which would possess human beings and make them slaves. "You cannot be a slave to God and mammon." Mammon must be de-throned.

## Chapter 4

## MATTHEW 6:25-34

## MY TRANSLATION

<sup>25</sup>Because of this I say to you, "Do not be anxious about your life: what to eat or what to drink, nor about your body: what to put on." Is not the life more than food and the body (more) than clothing? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds in the sky, that neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and your Father in heaven feeds them; are you not worth much more than they? <sup>27</sup>And who of you, by being anxious, is able to add upon his time of life one hour? <sup>28</sup>And concerning clothing, why are you anxious? Study the lilies of the fields, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin. <sup>29</sup>But I say to you, "Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these." <sup>30</sup>And if God thus dresses the grass of the fields today, (which is) thrown into the oven tomorrow, (will he) not (do) much more for you, of little faith? <sup>31</sup>Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, "'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?'" <sup>32</sup>For all of these the Gentiles seek after. Indeed, your Father in heaven knows that you have need of all of these. <sup>33</sup>But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all of these will be added to you. <sup>34</sup>Therefore, do not be

anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious itself; today has sufficient trouble of its own.

#### FORM AND SOURCE-CRITICAL ANALYSIS

As in the case of the previous two sections (Matthew 6:19-21 and Matthew 6:24), this pericope is classified form-critically as "logia," material in the form of sayings which are attributed to Jesus and which depict him primarily as a teacher of wisdom.<sup>1</sup> The section as a whole is an exhortation, although its internal construction contains exhortations, principles, arguments, and several other kinds of sayings. Betz points out that its style is that of the diatribe, a common rhetorical form in antiquity, often used by Paul, which consists largely of arguments with a fictional opponent and often raises rhetorical questions, questions which are really statements since their answers are obvious to the reader or listener.<sup>2</sup>

In terms of internal, form-critical construction, Matthew 6:25-34 is extremely complicated. At least three layers of construction are evident and a few others are possible.

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<sup>1</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, History of the Synoptic Tradition (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 80.

<sup>2</sup>Statement by Hans Dieter Betz, in class lecture, School of Theology at Claremont, November 22, 1977.

The first layer, the original and largest, consists of 6:25-26 and 28b-33. This is the original exhortation, to which the remaining verses were added. Bultmann suggests that of this material, v. 25 may have originally been an independent saying, but offers no reason why, and it seems to me that it fits too well with the rest of the material to have an independent origin.<sup>3</sup> The anxiety about food in v. 25 corresponds perfectly with the description of work in v. 26: sowing, reaping, and gathering into barns. Likewise, the anxiety about clothing in v. 25 corresponds exactly with the second description of work, in v. 28: toiling and spinning.

Bultmann also asserts the probability that vv. 31-33 are a secondary addition.<sup>4</sup> Again, however, he offers no arguments to support his view and whereas I will admit the possibility that he is correct, I believe it equally possible that vv. 31-33 belong to the original pericope and do not think it necessary to treat them as separate without any compelling evidence to the contrary.

The original exhortation, Matthew 6:25-26 and 28b-33, begins with an introductory formula which is very common within the Sermon on the Mount: "Because of this I say to you." Since this formula is not found in Luke's

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<sup>3</sup>Bultmann, p. 25.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

version (Luke 12:22-32) and since it is found several times in the Sermon on the Mount, it is probably the work of the author of the Sermon on the Mount, and hence, not part of the original pericope. Thus, the original pericope began, not with this formula, but with the exhortation upon which the whole section is based: "Do not be anxious about your life: what to eat or what to drink, nor about your body: what to put on." This exhortation itself can be broken down into an imperative against worrying, the identification of two locuses of worry, and the particular identification of three incorrect types of worrying. One locus of worry is the life. It is incorrect to worry about what the life will eat or drink. The other locus of worry is the body. It is incorrect to worry about what the body will put on.<sup>5</sup>

Next follows a proposition designed to support the exhortation just mentioned: "Is not the life more than food and the body more than clothing?" It is of course in the form of a rhetorical question requiring a positive answer. The implied conclusion is that the life is indeed more than food and the body more than clothing and that

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<sup>5</sup>Hans Dieter Betz, written analysis of Sermon on the Mount, presented to class, School of Theology at Claremont, Fall, 1977 -- for this paragraph and a great deal of the following analysis I have relied heavily upon this analysis by Betz.

therefore anxiety about food and clothing must be of a subordinate nature. The key needs of the life and the body, and hence the key source of anxiety, is something different.

Verse 26 begins a second argument in support of our exhortation. This argument, contained in v. 26 and vv. 28b-30, consists of two observations from nature which are presented as evidence of God's provision of food and clothing. As Betz points out, these are not just naive observations, but a sophisticated method of argument by analogy which was quite common in antiquity.<sup>6</sup> We find in a passage from Job an encouragement for this method of illustrating human existence with analogies from nature.

Job 12:7

But ask the beasts and they will teach you;  
the birds of the air and they will tell you;  
or the plants of the earth, and they will teach you;  
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.

The first illustration used in the Matthean text begins in v. 26 with an imperative: "Look at the birds in the sky." Next is the observation itself, in which the behaviour of birds is contrasted with behaviour of human beings, specifically human work involving the obtaining of food: "that neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns." This is followed in turn by another observation, namely,

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<sup>6</sup>Betz, lecture.

God's providence of food: "and your Father in heaven feeds them." This illustration is then ended with a rhetorical question requiring a positive answer: "are you not worth much more than they?" The implication is that since human beings indeed are worth much more than the birds, then God will most certainly provide food for them, and hence there is no need for anxiety about food for the life. The argument used here is called "a minori ad maius," arguing that what is true in a less significant matter is true in a more significant matter, a very common method of debate in antiquity.<sup>7</sup>

The second illustration, contained in vv. 28b-30, is essentially a parallel of the first, except with a new object, the lilies of the fields, and a new subject, labor involved in the making of clothes. Like v. 26, it begins with an imperative: "Study the lilies of the fields, how they grow." Next is the observation of the behaviour of the lilies, contrasted this time with human work involving the obtaining of clothing: "they neither toil nor spin." Then another observation, in v. 29, upon the splendorous clothing of the lilies: "But I say to you, 'Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these,'" leading into a rhetorical question which emphasizes God's providence:

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

"And if God thus dresses the grass of the fields today, which is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not do much more for you?" Notice here that the "a minori ad maius" argument is even more in evidence here, with the reference to the daily perishability of plants as over against the human being. Of course the conclusion here, as in the first illustration, is that God will most certainly provide clothing for human beings and hence there is no need for anxiety about clothing for the body. The two illustrations are then concluded by the identification of the pericope's readers or hearers, an address which is intended to rebuke those who are anxious about food and clothing, those who have not heeded these arguments and need to be shown them: "of little faith."

At this point I would observe that these two illustrations, using nature as an analogy to prove God's providence, and the subsequent lack of need for human anxiety about such things as food and clothing, are not original. Within the Judeo-Christian literature of antiquity there are several instances of just this sort of argument, of which the following are but a sample.

Psalms of Solomon 5:9-11  
 Birds and fish dost Thou nourish,  
 In that thou givest rain to the steppes that green  
     grass may spring up,  
     (so) to prepare fodder in the steppe for every  
     living thing;  
 And if they hunger, unto Thee do they lift up their  
     face.

Kings and rulers and peoples Thou dost nourish, O God;  
And who is the help of the poor and the needy, if not  
Thou, O Lord? (Charles)

Kid. 82b

In my whole life-time I have not seen a deer engaged in gathering fruits, a lion carrying burdens, or a fox as a shopkeeper, yet they are sustained without trouble, though they were created only to serve me, whereas I was created to serve my Maker. Now, if these, who were created only to serve me are sustained without trouble, how much more should I be sustained without trouble, I who was created to serve my Maker!

Matthew 10:29-31

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's will. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. (RSV)

In vv. 31-33 we have the concluding exhortation of this original pericope. Verse 31 repeats the original negative exhortation, describing improper types of anxiety: "Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?'" This is followed by a negative evaluation of such anxiety: "for all of these the Gentiles seek after." Then comes a comforting word of God's omniscience, implying His providence, which has already been dealt with: "Indeed, your Father in heaven knows that you have need of all of these." Finally, v. 33 concludes the section with a positive exhortation and a promise. First, the negative exhortation against improper anxiety is changed into a positive exhortation about the proper source of anxiety: "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness." Second, the

section ends with the promise of God's providence: "and all of these will be added to you." Here it should be pointed out that the phrase, "will be added," implies again the secondary nature of food and clothing. They "will be added" after the reception of something of greater importance, presumably membership in God's kingdom and among His righteous. This promise ends the original exhortation.

Somewhere along the line, two additions have been made.

The first of these, both in terms of sequence in the pericope and in terms of its date of intrusion, is the rhetorical question and connecting material of vv. 27 and 28a.

Verse 27 is in the form of a rhetorical question, this time requiring a negative answer: "And who of you, by being anxious, is able to add upon his time of life one hour?" The implied conclusion of course is that, since anxiety is certainly unable to perform such a thing, it is ineffective and should therefore be excluded from one's personality. Verse 28a is connecting material, needed to regain the argument which has been interrupted by this argument in v. 27. It restates the proposition being argued in the form of a rhetorical question, including within itself a restatement of the problem, anxiety, and its source, clothing: "And concerning clothing, why are you anxious?"

Several authors have referred to the probability that v. 27 is an intrusion into the original text. Schweizer argues that v. 27 interrupts both the context and the content of the text. It interrupts the context, by intruding an illustration using human life-span between two obviously carefully constructed illustrations using nature; by intruding an illustration dealing with anxiety in general between two illustrations dealing with particular sources of anxiety, namely food and clothing. Verse 27 also interrupts the content of the original text, interrupting an argument based upon the confidence of God with an argument based upon the ineffectiveness of anxiety.<sup>8</sup> Probably Jeremias is correct in assuming that v. 27 found its way into the text primarily because of the catchword "μερμερὺς" (being anxious).<sup>9</sup> Bultmann concludes that v. 27 is "a saying which could just as fittingly come between two Old Testament proverbs as it is ill-fitted to be between Matt. 6:26 and 28."<sup>10</sup>

Verse 34 comprises the final layer which has been added to the original exhortation. The probability that it

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<sup>8</sup>Eduard Schweizer, The Good News According to Matthew (London: S.P.C.K., 1976), p. 165.

<sup>9</sup>Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), p. 171.

<sup>10</sup>Bultmann, p. 103.

is the final layer comes from an examination of Luke's version, Luke 12:22-32. Such an examination reveals a very similar exhortation to that in Matthew, even to the point of including the same intrusion of which I have just spoken (Matthew 6:27 and Luke 12:25) in the same place. The two pericopes are only parallel, however, up to v. 33 in Matthew. Verse 34 is nowhere to be found in Luke. My conclusion, naturally, is that v. 34 is an addition to the original exhortation, and is most probably the last one.

Verse 34 consists of an exhortation: "Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow," followed by two supporting principles: 1) "for tomorrow will be anxious itself;" and 2) "today has sufficient trouble of its own." Both Green and Bultmann conclude that v. 34 is a traditional proverb which has been tacked on to the pericope, again because of the catchword, "μεριμνήετε" (be anxious).<sup>11</sup> Certainly there is ample evidence that such a proverb was quite common within the Hebraic literature.

Barakoth 9a

There is enough trouble in its hour.

Sanhedrin 100b

Fret not over tomorrow's trouble, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth, and peradventure tomorrow he is no more: thus he will be found grieving over a world that is not his.

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<sup>11</sup>Bultmann, pp. 84, 88; H. Benedict Green, The Gospel According to Matthew (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 94.

Proverbs 27:1

Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth. (RSV)

In conclusion, what we have here in this section, according to form and source-critical analysis, is an original exhortation, Matthew 6:25-26 and 28b-33, to which two additions have subsequently been made, first Matthew 6:27-28a, and then later Matthew 6:34. The actual sources of both the original pericope and the later intrusions, whether from Jewish tradition, the early church, or Jesus himself, remains a mystery. The important thing, however, is that one early Christian community felt it to be significant enough to include in that text which we today call "The Sermon on the Mount."

#### TERMINOLOGY

"μερ'μνᾶτε " (be anxious)

A correct understanding of "μερ'μνᾶτε " and its root, "μερ'μνᾶν ," is of central importance to a correct understanding of Matthew 6:25-34. This is the real subject with which the text deals.

In an article in Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Bultmann divides his discussion of "μερ'μνᾶν " into three parts; the Greek use of the word,

its use in the hellenistic-Jewish world, and its use within the early Christian literature.<sup>12</sup>

For the Greeks, "μεριμνᾶν" has a variety of meanings: "to care for someone or something," "to be intent on something," and "to strive after something," but most basically it means simply "to care."<sup>13</sup> For most of Greek philosophy, such "care" is a problem for human existence, since it weighs down the human being and inhibits the possibility of freedom. For the Greek, life is characterized and plagued by care: "One can hardly live one's life without cares. They even disturb sleep. The frivolous try to drown them in love or drink. But at last only death can free us from them."<sup>14</sup>

Within the hellenistic-Jewish world, Bultmann claims that, although many of these same uses for "μεριμνᾶν" continued to exist, more often than not the word "has the sense of 'anxious care.'"<sup>15</sup> Hence the key terms for "μεριμνᾶν" became "anxiety" or "worry."

Finally, within the early Christian literature, all three words: "care," "anxiety," and "worry," are

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<sup>12</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, "μεριμνᾶν," in Gerhard Kittel (ed.) Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), IV., 589-593.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., IV., 589.      <sup>14</sup>Ibid., IV., 590.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

appropriate. And, like the Greeks, early Christians concluded that human life is characterized by "μερμῆς." Unlike the Greeks, however, "μερμῆς" is not unilaterally condemned as a negative aspect of human existence. Within the New Testament, anxiety per se is not always the issue. Quite often it is the source and object of anxiety, the why and wherefore, which is the issue.<sup>16</sup> In his book, Theology of the New Testament, Bultmann points in particular to I Corinthians 7:32-34, where Paul designates two types of "μερμῆς." First there is anxiety "about the affairs of the Lord." Opposed to this is anxiety "about worldly affairs." Of the two, the first is recommended, the second discouraged.<sup>17</sup>

This latter differentiation between "acceptable" anxiety and "unacceptable" anxiety is reflected in our text, Matthew 6:25-34. Within the negative exhortation of the text, anxiety per se is not argued against. Rather, the argument is directed against specific sources of anxiety, namely the procurement of food and clothing. And, in the positive exhortation of the text, a specific source of anxiety is recommended as a replacement, namely anxiety

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., IV., 591ff.

<sup>17</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951, 1955), pp. 226, 242.

about membership in God's kingdom and being a part of His righteousness.

Two authors, Jeremias and Green (actually Green just accepts and reproduces Jeremias' argument), have argued against understanding "μερμνῶν" primarily in terms of anxiety.<sup>18</sup> Jeremias argues that "μερμνῶν" has two equally plausible meanings, "to take anxious thought," or "to put forth an effort," and that the latter is more suitable to the text than the former because of three reasons. First, the second meaning would seem to be the best because "μερμνῶν" seems to be used interchangeably with two words in vv. 32 and 33 whose root is "ζητέω," meaning "I seek." While I will admit that the use of the word "ζητέω" does in fact qualify our use of the word "μερμνῶν," and allows us to understand anxiety in more of a seeking, active sense than a mere passive sense, I am unwilling to strip the word of its primary connotation of care, worry, and anxiety. Can it not be said that, just as "ζητέω" qualifies "μερμνῶν," so too does "μερμνῶν" qualify "ζητέω," forcing us to understand "seeking" in this text as an "anxious seeking"? Second, Jeremias argues that in v. 27 "anxiety" makes no sense. On the contrary, it makes perfectly good sense to me, every bit as much as

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<sup>18</sup>Jeremias, p. 214; Green, p. 93.

"putting forth an effort." Finally, Jeremias argues that the two analogies from nature speak primarily of effort, not anxiety. Again, I will grant him his point, but argue that just as the analogies qualify the meaning of "μεριμνᾶν," so too does "μεριμνᾶν" qualify the meaning of the analogies.

It seems to me that Jeremias' primary mistake is that he attempts to argue that the text, Matthew 6:25-34, is either about "anxiety" or about "putting forth an effort" when actually the text is about both. The text correctly understands that "putting forth an effort" and "seeking" are forms of human behaviour which are usually manifestations of something within the psychological make-up of the human being, namely "anxiety." Likewise, the text correctly understands that the human psyche is not a passive element within the human being, but in fact has a profound effect upon human behaviour. "Anxiety" and "seeking" cannot and should not be separated. The latter is simply the outer manifestation of the former.

#### INTERPRETATION

To summarize what has already been said, Matthew 6:25-34 is an exhortation. It is primarily an exhortation against anxiety, not anxiety in general, but against anxiety about food and clothing, the necessities of life.

This exhortation seems to be primarily supported by

three arguments. First, in v. 25 it is implied that true human selfhood involves much more than these necessities. Since the life and the body are more than food and clothing, one must conclude that food and clothing are only subordinate concerns. There is something greater which merits the anxiety of the human being. Second, the text argues, primarily through analogy and rhetorical question, that anxiety about the necessities of life is not necessary because they will be provided by God. We are assured that, if God feeds the birds and clothes the lilies, then he will most certainly feed and cloth human beings. Verse 32 insures us that God knows of our needs and v. 33 promises that they will be added to us. Third, the text points out, in v. 27, the uselessness of anxiety and argues our consequent dependence upon God's providence. By being anxious we can't even add a single hour to our life-spans (as a matter of fact most doctors would assert that over-anxiety quite often functions to shorten life-spans).

Furthermore, the text admonishes not just anxiety, which is of course primarily an internal, psychological event. Here we have a very perceptive understanding of the interdependence of one's internal psychological motivation and one's external behaviour. Internal "anxiety" about food and clothing leads in turn to an external "seeking" of these things. Therefore this "seeking" is admonished as well, and we are warned in vv. 32 and 33 that, whereas

the Gentiles seek after these things, we should seek something else first. It is foolish to seek what is and can only be given.

This understanding of the text leads to a particular understanding of food and clothing, of the necessities of life, and implies as well an understanding of human work.

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer points out, modern human beings tend to believe that food and clothing are things to be secured by them, to be earned by work. "'Man-in-revolt' imagines that there is a relation of cause and effect between work and sustenance."<sup>19</sup> The primary function of work, we believe, is to secure the necessities of life. We then receive these necessities as reward for our work.

Our text, however, provides a radically alternative way of looking at these things. Bonhoeffer correctly interpretes the meaning of the text when he concludes, "bread is not to be valued as the reward for work."<sup>20</sup> Rather, bread, and all the necessities of life, are God's gifts to us. They are gifts of his providence, not the result of our work. This in turn leads us to a new reason

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<sup>19</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 199.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

for work, a new source of anxiety, a new object to seek. Instead of food and clothing, v. 33 exhorts us to "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness." We are exhorted to do the will of God. Membership in God's kingdom, not the necessities of life, is the correct source of anxiety and hence the correct function of work.

This does not mean, of course, that human beings are no longer to sow or reap or gather into barns, or to toil or spin. Human beings are still to grow food and make clothes. The difference is that they no longer do so primarily because of anxiety about food and clothing; they no longer primarily seek the necessities of life. Rather, such human work becomes primarily a function of seeking God's kingdom.

This may sound like a relatively insignificant change, but in fact, it is very radical. Food and clothing are no longer earned. They are gifts. The earth owes us nothing. What we have is given to us. Bonhoeffer illustrates this new relationship to work and to life's necessities with a beautiful quote from Luther:

Now mark ye, no beast worketh for his sustenance, but each hath his proper function, according to which he seeketh and findeth his own food. The bird doth fly and sing, she maketh nests and beareth young. That is her work, but yet she doth not nourish herself thereby. Oxen plough, horses draw carts and fight, sheep give wool, milk, and cheese, for it is their function to do so. But they do not nurture themselves thereby. Nay, the earth bringeth forth grass, and nurtureth them through God's blessing. Likewise, it

is man's bounden duty to work and do things, and yet withal that it is Another who nurtureth him: it is not his own work, but the bounteous blessing of God.<sup>21</sup>

Implied here is a complete reorientation of the human attitude toward the earth, toward other human beings, and toward one's work. Such an attitude is characterized not by an anxious, aggressive need to grab and take, but rather by a grateful and humble sense of duty.

Here as in chapter 2, it must be emphasized that such work is not intended to be done as a means of meriting membership in God's kingdom. Just as we cannot earn food and clothing, neither can we earn God's grace. God's grace and forgiveness are freely given to all. In chapter three, however, we discovered that this grace can be rejected by human beings, that human beings are free to choose either God or mammon. To choose grace is not to earn grace, but to participate in the grace event. Grace enables us to be a part of God's work in the world, and as such it assures us of a meaningful existence. Work never earns. It participates.

Furthermore, if work's purpose is primarily that of service to God and not the procurement of life's necessities, it is amazing how few "necessities" there really are. When "necessities" are the object of work it becomes very

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

easy to believe that many things are "necessities" which are really "luxuries." It is interesting to note, as Betz has done, the lack of mention in the text of those things which are usually considered to be dire necessities in our modern society.<sup>22</sup> Only food and clothing are listed. There is no mention of health, or housing, or education, and certainly no one in antiquity would dream of including an automobile or a T.V. set.

In conclusion, then, Matthew 6:25-34 has many important implications for our modern understanding of economics. So do the previous two sections which I have analyzed, Matthew 6:19-21 and Matthew 6:24. It is the task of the next chapter to discuss these implications in more detail.

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<sup>22</sup>Betz, lecture

## Chapter 5

## ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

I am convinced that the three New Testament passages which I have analyzed, Matthew 6:19-21, Matthew 6:24, and Matthew 6:25-34, suggest particular understandings of human existence which in turn affirm some serious and exciting implications for our present understandings of the economic behaviour of human beings.

Matthew 6:19-21 implies an understanding of human existence characterized chiefly in terms of the seeking of treasure. Human existence is not complete and perfect and whole in and of itself. It is tenuous, insecure, and anxious. Human beings are continually seeking for treasure -- for security, meaning, completeness, perfection. Such treasure is not inside the self, but outside. Consequently, the human self is always reaching and stretching toward this other, this treasure, for meaning and security. So important is this treasure, that the very definition, the very meaning and being of the self is defined in terms of the treasure which is sought after. If its treasure is doomed to destruction, then so too, is the self. Hence the choice of the treasure which is sought is of absolute importance to the self. His/Her life depends upon it.

The pericope presents two alternative treasures --

treasures upon the earth and treasures in heaven. Treasures upon the earth are doomed to destruction, either because of natural decay, human crime, or human error. Thus, the human being who seeks them is lost. His/Her life is condemned to a state of insecurity, anxiety, and lack of meaning. Treasures in heaven, on the other hand, are permanent. To the person who seeks them they offer security and meaning. Such treasures are stored up through righteousness; through humble surrender of one's being to God, aligning him/herself with and complying to God's will. To put oneself in the hands of God and to serve Him, is to store up treasure which is imperishable and which offers ultimate security.

Matthew 6:24 implies an understanding of human existence characterized as slavery. As in the previous section, human life is imperfect and incomplete, dependent upon some outside other for meaning and security. Human existence is slavery. It is ultimately dependent upon some other and ultimately serves that other. Again, the key is which lord one chooses to serve. Such a decision is either-or, not both-and. A person can be a slave to only one lord.

The pericope presents two alternative lords -- God and mammon. Mammon is understood primarily as the demonic and powerful human desire for wealth and possessions -- the acquisitive drive. Contrary to human opinion that wealth

frees persons, the desire for wealth is presented here as a lord which enslaves persons, which forces them into positions of unflagging dependence and servitude. Mammon controls human life and makes one unable to serve and depend upon God. If one is to become a slave of God, he/she must strip wealth of its demonic power as lord. Wealth must be exorcised.

Matthew 6:25-34 implies an understanding of human existence characterized by anxiety, seeking, and work. Anxiety is that inner, psychological state of the human being often understood in terms of worry or care. It inevitably results in that outer, physical behaviour which may be called seeking, which in turn is the source of work. All anxiety, seeking, and work results from some source, some emptiness, some sense of incompleteness, and strives to fill that emptiness.

Again, the pericope presents two alternatives, two possible sources of anxiety.

The first is the human need for food and clothing, often considered to be the most basic necessities for life. Three arguments are presented against the consideration of food and clothing as the primary sources of human anxiety, and hence the primary focus of seeking and work. First, it is argued that human life is much more than food and clothing. The implication and conclusion is that there is something much greater which merits our anxiety, leaving

food and clothing as subordinate necessities which should not be primary sources of concern. Second, the text beautifully illustrates the viewpoint that God will provide food and clothing. They are gifts of His providence, so we need not anxiously seek them. Third, the text points out the helplessness of anxiety, seeking, and working apart from God's providence. By being anxious, I cannot even add one hour upon my life-span. For food and clothing, for all of my necessities, I am ultimately forced to rely upon God's kindness.

Thus, anxiety about food and clothing, according to the text, amounts to human arrogance. We falsely believe that, through our work, we "earn" our food and clothing. We go through life with the incorrect assumption that the world "owes" us for our effort. In fact, we earn nothing and the world owes us nothing. All that we have, whether necessities or wealth, has been given to us through the grace of God's providence.

In place of this arrogant anxiety for food and clothing, the pericope suggests instead that we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Here is what should be the primary source of anxiety, the foremost focus of our seeking and working -- membership in God's kingdom. This is a need which merits our concern even more than the need for food and clothing. Food and clothing are gifts from God, necessary only in-so-far as they enable us to

seek out and work toward this greatest of all needs. Work should not be an anxious, aggressive effort to grab and take. It should be a grateful and humble sense of duty.

Finally, none of these pericopes attempts to encourage human beings to earn God's grace. Storing up treasure, being a slave, and working are never activities whose end is compensation, no matter whether such compensation is defined in terms of food and clothing or in terms of meaning and security for life. All of these are gifts from God, not profit. The end of such activity is not compensation, but participation; participation in God's will for this earth and its history. By offering us this chance to participate in His own work, God offers us grace -- the opportunity for a life whose meaning is not susceptible to either natural decay or to human crime and error, but which is as secure as God Himself.

Unfortunately, contemporary American economic behaviour reveals the very opposite of the recommendations implied in these three texts. Workers today frantically attempt to "earn" the right to consume first the necessities of life (food and clothing), and then the luxuries of life (treasures upon the earth). We are slaves of mammon, the demonic desire to acquire and to consume. And we are the most prolific consumers the world has ever known. It has been estimated that "25 percent of the world's people use 80-90 percent of its raw materials, and

that the United States, with less than 6 percent of the population, uses 30-40 percent of these primary resources."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the most illustrative characteristic of our society is that of obesity. We are a fat nation. Most revealing is a comment in 1970 that, "American cinema owners have reportedly been forced to broaden the seats in cinemas not simply for the comfort of filmgoers but actually to enable them to get their behinds down."<sup>2</sup>

Our obesity is killing us. We are "working" and "earning" enough to stuff ourselves to the point that our health is seriously threatened. Approximately 50 percent of the 700,000 annual heart-disease deaths in the U.S. are directly related to obesity. "Although there is malnutrition, more die in the United States of too much food than of too little."<sup>3</sup> Even our pets consume so much that I have recently observed a television commercial advertising diet dog food.

Obesity is only one example of what consumption in general is doing to us. We work at a frantic pace in order

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Sieger Derr, Ecology and Human Need (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), p. 117.

<sup>2</sup>Staffan Burenstam Linder, The Harried Leisure Class (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 50.

<sup>3</sup>John Kenneth Galbraith, The Affluent Society (New York: New American Library, 1958), p. 117.

to "produce" more goods and to "earn" the right to consume them. When such consumption proves to be lacking in total satisfaction, the immediate assumption is that we must consume something else or consume more. As a result, we are forced to up our already furious pace of work. What we have in the end is a "process of continual striving for more and more, the treadmill of always having to earn more in order to buy more."<sup>4</sup> Such a process is "never finished, never fulfilling, and ultimately exhausting."<sup>5</sup> It is mammon, and as such it so enslaves the individual that ultimately it destroys any opportunity for him/her to become a slave of God. When that happens, the individual has no more hope than a corpse. He/She has been brutally murdered.

Not only are individuals being killed. Our frenetic race toward greater and greater levels of production and consumption seriously endanger the survival of the human race and life itself. It can no longer be denied that our contemporary American economic behaviour has "set technological man on a course which could alter dangerously and perhaps irreversibly, the natural systems of his

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<sup>4</sup>Henry B. Clark, Escape From the Money Trap (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1973), p. 14.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

planet upon which his biological survival depends."<sup>6</sup> Contrary to those who express concern that the world will die with a bang, or a whimper, it will more than likely pass out of existence with a loud burp.

New York Yankee baseball greats Yogi Berra and Moose Skowron had messed up their directions on the New Jersey turnpike, causing Yogi to comment, "We're lost, but we're making good time." And that pretty well sums up our current economic situation. It is now imperative that we become concerned, not about making good time, but about finding our way.

Where have we gone wrong? Why have we become slaves of mammon? Is ours a problem only of individual decision or are there other culprits lurking in the bushes? Is capitalist economic theory at fault? Should we blame the technological revolution? How do we find our way to economic behaviour which seeks to store up treasure in heaven; which depends upon and serves God instead of mammon; which thankfully receives the gifts of God and humbly seeks to participate in His kingdom and His righteousness?

First of all, it is essential that we realize that our primary problem is much older than capitalist,

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<sup>6</sup>Barbara Ward and Rene Dubos, Only One Earth (New York: Norton, 1972), p. 11.

socialist, or communist economic systems. The fact that anxiety about food and clothing, the acquisitive drive, and the correct understanding of work are discussed in New Testament texts from the first century A.D. suggest that human beings struggled with these issues long before the advent of our modern economic systems. Although it is hard to say when human beings first became concerned with the demonic power of mammon, it seems as if mammon itself, the acquisitive drive, is as old as humanity. In fact, Van Oyen suggests that vulnerability to mammon is a fundamental difference between human beings and animals:

The animal lives by instinct, and is satisfied with what is necessary for supporting his life. Man cannot live within these limits as a fundamental principle; even the primitive man in the bush wears a ring in his nose or ears; he wears beautiful coral or a colored loincloth. In one way or another he shows that he is a human being by something superfluous, whether through personal adornment, or in his dwelling, or in his food.<sup>7</sup>

Likewise, Ward and Dubos point out that historical examination of how the wealthy have behaved down through the ages reveals the general presence of the acquisitive drive within basic human nature:

It is a fairly general characteristic of human nature that men seek to avoid backbreaking and monotonous work, that they like comfort, are fascinated by personal possessions, and enjoy having a good time. The proof of this basic psychological bias can be seen

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<sup>7</sup>Hendrik Van Oyen, Affluence and the Christian (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 4.

in the behaviour of any wealthy group ever since neolithic man began, through settled agriculture, to build up a surplus of goods above the level of tribal subsistence.<sup>8</sup>

Thus it would seem that at least a few of our questions are answered. We are slaves of mammon, not primarily because of technology, or because of a particular economic institution or system, but because vulnerability to mammon is inherent in human nature; it has been a problem for human beings since the beginnings of their existence. As such, it is very much an individual problem.

Yet despite the fact that human greed and anxiety have plagued persons down through the centuries, such greed and anxiety seem to have escalated beyond all bounds in our own society. Never before have they attained the fantastic proportions which they have in the United States today. Never before have people succumbed to their demonic power to the extent that is evident today. Never before has the demonic power of mammon posed such a danger to us.

Part of the reason is technology. Technology has given us the tools to make possible previously unheard of levels of production and consumption. Technology is neutral. It is not evil per se. As a matter of fact, science and technology have played crucial roles in the

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<sup>8</sup>Ward and Dubos, pp. 9-10.

many changes which have been highly beneficial to human beings in the past century:

The nostalgia that wishes simply to turn the clock back forgets that a hundred years ago average life expectancy may have been thirty years less than it is today, forgets that city air was foul with coal smoke before the industrial revolution, forgets that primitive sewage practices made water pollution worse than today in many places, and forgets a whole host of social and technological changes that have given more humanizing possibilities to the life of the average man.<sup>9</sup>

Yet technology also tremendously magnified the consequences of enslavement to mammon. The speed of the escalating need for more and more, and the consequent anxiety, frustration, and alienation, have been increased a hundredfold by technology. Hence, our three New Testament texts are probably even more relevant to us today than they were for their first readers and listeners. We must not condemn technology. But we must be more careful with it, must be more aware of its power both for good and for evil.

However, technology is not the only reason for the tremendous proliferation of the acquisitive drive in contemporary American society. Another very real reason is the capitalist economic system in which we work and live.

As we have seen, individuals have always been susceptible to the power of mammon, to incorrect understanding of anxiety and the nature of work. At the same

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<sup>9</sup>Derr, p. 77.

time it seems to me that the magnitude of this human susceptibility is very much dependent upon the systems and institutions which make up the environment in which the individual lives and works. Whereas the individual's environment cannot decide for him/her, it nevertheless very much influences the choice that is made. An economic system can encourage one sort of decision and discourage another. And, an economic system can be extremely dangerous if it encourages erroneous assumptions and decisions which are already a very great temptation to human beings, if it encourages us to understand work as merely a means to the accumulation of the necessities and luxuries of life, if it encourages an anthropology which is dangerously opposite that of our New Testament texts.

I will admit that our New Testament text was written and spoken for persons who had never heard of capitalist, socialist, or communist economic systems. However, it is also true that, if the text is to speak to us, it must speak to our own understandings of work, mammon, treasures, and necessities. And most of these, I submit, have been greatly influenced by our capitalist economic system and its anthropology. One simply cannot talk about individual understanding, individual decision, and individual change apart from those systems and institutions which make up one's environment.

Schumacher addresses this issue very clearly in his book, Small is Beautiful. Whereas he asserts the primacy of the truth that, "Systems are never more nor less than incarnations of man's most basic attitudes,"<sup>10</sup> he admits the other truth that human attitudes are quite often shaped by the systems in which they exist. To underline this last truth, he offers a helpful quote from R.H. Tawney's The Acquisitive Society:

It is obvious, indeed, that no change of system or machinery can avert those causes of social malaise which consist in the egotism, greed, or quarrelsomeness of human nature. What it can do is to create an environment in which those are not the qualities which are encouraged. It cannot secure that men live up to their principles. What it can do is to establish their social order upon principles to which, if they please, they can live up and not live down. It cannot control their actions. It can offer them an end on which to fix their minds. And, as their minds are, so in the long run and with exceptions, their practical activity will be.<sup>11</sup>

Hence, it is imperative that we bring our New Testament texts into confrontation with the economic system in which we Americans live and work. That system is capitalism.

At this point it is important to point out that in this project I do not wish to enter into a discussion of

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<sup>10</sup>E.F. Schumacher, Small is Beautiful (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 263.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 262.

the comparative merits of capitalist, socialist, and communist economic systems. I have neither the time nor the ability to adequately bring all three into confrontation with our New Testament texts and then to decide which is better and which is worse. At this point, an analysis of capitalism, that economic system within which my own life and ministry takes place, and with which I am the most familiar, is more than enough for me to tackle. Furthermore, I strongly suspect, although I don't know for sure, that most, if not all, of the problems which I will discuss in terms of capitalism are present within the other two economic systems as well. I am pretty sure that all three begin their economic thinking from incorrect starting places and with incorrect assumptions about human anthropology. The primary issue which seems to separate the three, the issue of individual vrs. social ownership of property, seems rather peripheral to the gutsy economic issues addressed by our New Testament texts. Seifert says it very well: "The cynic remarks that under capitalism man exploits man, while under communism it is the other way around!"<sup>12</sup> Thus, in this project I will stick to an analysis of capitalism only.

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<sup>12</sup>Harvey Seifert, Ethical Resources for Political and Economic Decision (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), p. 67.

Also, it seems to me that no critic of capitalism should begin without an awareness and an appreciation for its accomplishments. Seifert writes, "Regardless, of how one may wish to evaluate capitalism today, in its beginnings this was a major progressive change that made possible the economic achievements of the past century and laid the foundations for a possible super-industrial society in the future."<sup>13</sup> Despite whatever else is said of capitalism, one must not overlook what it has made possible in the areas of education, health, and resources for art and beauty. While living and working in a capitalist economy, most Americans have recieved, among other things, plenty to eat, plenty to wear, and sufficient housing; ready access to educational resources such as books, television, newspapers, and magazines; and excellent health care along with the chance for a long life-span.

Moreover, Morgan points out that Adam Smith and the other pioneers in capitalist economic theory were seriously concerned to develop a system which would work for general welfare and the public good. "In none of the great economists is there any inclination to encourage self-interest

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

to the public hurt. They may be accused of naivete, but they cannot be accused of anti-social intent."<sup>14</sup>

Yet despite the intentions of its original founders, our three New Testament texts compel us as Christians to ask some very hard questions of our own capitalist economic system. Does it promote the understanding of the acquisition of the necessities of life as being gifts of God? Does it help persons to realize that the primary necessity of human life is work, the need to participate in God's own work upon the earth? Or does capitalism encourage persons to understand work as the means toward "earning" both the necessities of life and treasures of the earth, and does it foster attempts to seek treasures of the earth which inevitably enslave persons to mammon?

Theoretically, it seems evident that capitalism is based upon an anthropology which encourages the latter, rather than the former, economic behaviour. Kean points out that capitalism is based upon an anthropology which assumes "not only that man is an acquisitive animal, but that his acquisitive instincts are the primary clues to his

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<sup>14</sup>Bruce Morgan, Christians, the Church, and Property (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), p. 33.

whole nature."<sup>15</sup> Capitalism understands the existence of human greed and selfishness and attempts to harness it for the benefit of society. Clark quotes Adam Smith's The Wealth of the Nations: "each individual's effort to make the most profitable use of his resources will also lead to the best use of those resources for society as a whole."<sup>16</sup> Capitalism assumes that personal gain is the motivation for all human action and defines personal gain solely in terms of the acquisition and possession of personal property. Personal gain is the opposite of benevolence. Seifert quotes Adam Smith: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest."<sup>17</sup> Human work is not the primary need of human life. It is not important as a means of humble slavery to God. Rather, work is important only as means of "earning" profit and is measured in terms of cash-value or economic returns. Schumacher points out that, "Modern economics . . . considers consumption to be the sole end and purpose of all economic activity, taking the factors of production --

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<sup>15</sup>Charles Duell Kean, "The Significance of Capitalism," in Joseph F. Fletcher (ed.) Christianity and Property (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947), p. 161.

<sup>16</sup>Clark, p. 30.      <sup>17</sup>Seifert, p. 66.

land, labor (my underline), and capital -- as the means."<sup>18</sup> As a result, capitalism encourages a definition of human success or failure measured in terms of the acquisition of property. The more I can "earn," the more successful I am.

It was of course inevitable that such a system should lead to a spiraling need to "earn" more and more goods, to be more and more successful. This acquisitive drive, this need to consume which in turn requires work to "earn" consumable items, this self-interest which is encouraged by capitalism in the name of the public interest, has never shown any sign of becoming satiated.

Ward and Dubos ask:

But where along the escalator is the exit to a level floor? Is there a kind of biological limit to man's desire for food, shelter, leisure, entertainment, talking by telephone, moving about in a motor car, flying in airplanes, visiting distant lands? Is there a threshold beyond which desire and curiosity cannot be pushed? We do not know. But clearly we have not reached it yet.<sup>19</sup>

All of this has escalated to the point that our entire American economic system is built upon and is dependent upon the need to "earn" or "produce" more and more. As the following quote from Galbraith points out,

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<sup>18</sup>Schumacher, p. 58.

<sup>19</sup>Ward and Dubos, p. 122

national success and failure is often defined solely in terms of production.

Some years ago, the Republicans, currently in office and defending their stewardship under heavy opposition attack were moved to protest that the current year was the second best in history . . . No one would be so eccentric as to suppose that second best meant second best in the progress of the arts and the sciences. No one would assume that it referred to health, education, or the battle against juvenile delinquency. There was no suggestion that a better or poorer year was one in which the chances for survival amidst the radioactive furniture of the world had increased or diminished. Despite a marked and somewhat ostensible preoccupation with religious observances at the time, no one was moved to suppose that the year in question was the second best as measured by the number of people who had found enduring spiritual solace.

Second best could mean only one thing -- that the production of goods was the second highest in history.<sup>20</sup>

This spiral of increasing consumption and increasing production has ascended to such heights, claims Galbraith, that it has reached the absurd point where billions must be spent to create needs to buy up all of the products which are produced.<sup>21</sup> As increasing affluence reduces the importance of those goods which result from high rates of production (compare, for instance, the urgency of the desire of a starving Indian peasant for a piece of bread to that of an average American citizen for a butter-up corn popper), an economic system which is based upon the acquisitive drive finds itself in the embarrassing

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<sup>20</sup>Galbraith, p. 116.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 132ff.

situation of having to actively and overtly stimulate wants. Barbour estimates that, "We spend \$24 billion annually on advertising, much of which stimulates unnecessary consumption."<sup>22</sup> And the foolish spiral continues, as production is increased to satisfy wants which in fact are created by production itself. Galbraith characterizes this silliness beautifully: "For then the individual who urges the importance of production to satisfy these wants is precisely in the position of the onlooker who applauds the efforts of the squirrel to keep abreast of the wheel that is propelled by his own efforts."<sup>23</sup>

Not only does our modern economic system encourage and actively push people to want more and more things; it has also seriously misconstrued the importance of work for the individual. According to our New Testament texts, work as a means of participating in the grace event is the primary need of human life, even more primary than food and clothing. For the modern economist, work is evil, and is something which must, if possible, be eliminated. As a result, human hands are replaced by machines wherever it is viable to do so.

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<sup>22</sup>Ian G. Barbour, Finite Resources and the Human Future (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976), p. 30.

<sup>23</sup>Galbraith, p. 140.

There is universal agreement that a fundamental source of wealth is human labour. Now, the modern economist has been brought up to consider "labour" or work as little more than a necessary evil. From the point of view of the employer, it is in any case simply an item of cost, to be reduced to a minimum if it cannot be eliminated altogether, say, by automation. From the point of view of the workman, it is a "disutility"; to work is to make a sacrifice of one's leisure and comfort, and wages are a kind of compensation for the sacrifice.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, wherever possible work has been eliminated, through techniques like automation and division of labor. Unfortunately such techniques have managed to make much work which cannot be eliminated into the inhuman chore which modern economics claims it was to begin with (which seems to me like the perfect example of the "self-fulfilling prophesy"). Morgan concludes, "One of the great complications is that with the mechanizing, routinizing, and impersonalizing of much modern labor it is quite utopian to hope that any man is going to find deep-going fulfillment and sense of exciting creativity in his financially compensated occupation."<sup>25</sup> Schumacher describes the situation even more unfavorably:

That soul-destroying, meaningless, mechanical, monotonous, moronic work is an insult to human nature which must necessarily and inevitably produce either escapism or aggression, and that no amount of "bread and circuses" can compensate for the damage done -- these are facts which are neither denied nor acknowledged but are met with an unbreakable conspiracy of

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<sup>24</sup>Schumacher, p. 54.

<sup>25</sup>Morgan, p. 250.

silence -- because to deny them would be too obviously absurd and to acknowledge them would condemn the central preoccupation of modern society as a crime against humanity.<sup>26</sup>

There can be no doubt that capitalism is an economic system whose anthropology and whose actual working out is in direct conflict with our three New Testament texts. At least in part because of our capitalist economic system, we have become slaves of mammon rather than God. We have become seekers of treasures upon the earth and have found ourselves in an anxiety-ridden, never-fulfilled, and ultimately insecure existence. We have become slaves of mammon, slaves of that force which fundamentally opposes God, which threatens not only our own lives, but the quality of life for other human beings (both now and in the future), and the quality of life in general upon the earth. While living and working in a capitalist economic system we have become slaves of mammon -- we have misunderstood and dehumanized work and consequently our relationship to the earth, to other human beings, and to God. What must we do?

First of all, it seems to me that we must go back to a previous discussion and reiterate that what we have here is basically a problem which transcends any system of economics. Furthermore, as Schumacher has pointed out,

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<sup>26</sup>Schumacher, p. 38.

although an economic system has great power to influence personal points of view, the reverse is even more so the case. "Systems are never more nor less than incarnations of man's most basic attitudes."<sup>27</sup> If we are going to re-orient our capitalist economic system, we must begin on the ground floor, with individuals. Listing the requirements needed for a non-consumptive society, Linder writes:

Its chief characteristic must be, however, that it require a change at the heart of the individual, rather than a change in the political system of the society. The regiment of consumption cannot be abolished collectively through political pressure. A society escaping from the decadence of growth can be formed only by a sum of individuals individually transformed.<sup>28</sup>

While I disagree with Linder's opposition to all attempts at political change, I think he is right on in defining our problem as, first and foremost, one which requires change in individuals.

This is of course both a tremendous opportunity and a tremendous responsibility for today's church. From our pulpits and in our classrooms we are called upon more than ever before to preach and teach the message proclaimed in the three New Testament texts which I have analyzed in this project. It is both a message of confrontation and judgment, and a message of promise. It is an exhortation

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 263.

<sup>28</sup>Linder, p. 145.

against storing up treasures upon the earth, against becoming a slave of mammon, and against being anxious about and trying to "earn" food and clothing (or what we mistakenly believe to be the necessities of life). It is a promise of the gift of food and clothing along with the possibility of something much more important -- the storing up of treasure in heaven, becoming a slave of God, and becoming a member of God's kingdom and His righteousness.

This message must be proclaimed straight-forwardly and with authority. It must not be diluted. In my analysis of Matthew 6:24 I have concluded that we are dealing here with an either-or situation -- there is no in-between or both-and. One is either for God or for mammon. One is either for God or against Him. Each individual act requires that just such a decision be made.

Yet our message must also be proclaimed with sensitivity and with a careful awareness of the complexity and confusion of human motivation. The problem is simply not so clear-cut as we would like it to be.

It is really much too simple to conclude that people always work because they wish to "earn" things, whether they be necessities or luxuries. Those motivations and anxieties which stimulate human work are exceedingly complex and diverse, and are often ambiguous or obscure. Seifert writes that "Business administrators now realize that reliance on financial incentives releases but a

fraction of the cooperation of workers. The motivation of most workers is in the range of a desire for security or social acceptance, or interest in creative work or social participation."<sup>29</sup> Acquisitive drive and the service of God are only two of a whole plethora of motivations. Besides those mentioned in Seifert's quote, the list includes the desire for power, for emotional ecstasy, for variety of experience; the hunger for affection, for social approval or status, and so on. And it is probable that every single human act is stimulated in varying degrees by varying motivations, sometimes by one and other times by many. Furthermore, the problem is still more complicated by the probability that acts are often unconsciously motivated.

Hence it is essential that the well-meaning proclaimer of our New Testament texts be very careful in presenting his/her message. Even though many motivations to work are essentially varying kinds and degrees of self-interest, and even though they may often divert one away from what should be the motivation for work, namely selfless service of God, it is nevertheless incorrect to define a hunger for affection as the need to acquire possessions. A person may conceivably work 60-70 hours a week in order to impress his/her peers and not really give a damn about

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<sup>29</sup>Seifert, p. 69.

his/her paycheck.

On the other hand, it is very important to be aware of the complicated and very close relationship of the acquisitive drive to some of these other self-interested motivations. Much of the power of the acquisitive drive is dependent upon its close association to other very powerful drives. Take for instance the human need for social approval, the need to be accepted by others as an equal. For societies throughout history, to be accepted involved owning what everyone else owned. To own less was to be an outcast. To own more likewise caused one to be an outcast unless it was possible to join another, higher class of people with equal tastes. Hence, what is considered proper to own and what is considered extra, or a luxury, is dependent upon the accepted standards of the group of people by which one hopes to be accepted. One need only drive from Beverly Hills to Watts to get the point. As Van Oyen points out, to be socially accepted in our affluent society involves owning many things which were considered luxuries not so long ago.

Thus, a handkerchief was considered an uncommon luxury till well into the eighteenth century. Think of our table utensils -- only kings used to treat themselves to the luxury of using forks. There was a time when the enjoyment of tea and coffee was punished, because it was evidence of objectionable luxury. Goethe's mother threw away the 'cream ice' that the family had received from the nearby baronial castle,

because she would not allow her family such luxury, and moreover, that 'cream ice' was very unhealthy.<sup>30</sup>

One must conclude from this that much more is at stake here than simple greed. To obey the exhortation against storing up treasures upon earth and against being anxious about food and clothing means bringing upon oneself some very hard consequences. In our affluent society, one who voluntarily declines affluence risks being labeled a fanatic, and risks becoming an outcast. In fact, so many pressures are put upon individuals to conform to acquisitive life-styles in our country that few, if any, will ever be able to completely surrender those life-styles. It is realistic to assume that most of us, even after taking seriously the message of our three New Testament texts, will continue to live somewhere between to two extremes of total slavery to God and total slavery to mammon. And since one cannot be a slave to both God and mammon, it will be the case that sometimes we will be a slave to God and sometimes we will enslave ourselves to mammon.

Hence the task of the church and of its collective ministers is not simply to preach and teach the exhortations of our three texts. Having exhorted persons to give up their desire for earthly treasures, it is the responsibility of the church to understand and comfort them when

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<sup>30</sup>Van Oyen, p. 6.

they fail; to congratulate them and celebrate with them when they succeed; and then to proclaim the exhortation again.

However, the church's responsibility does not end with individual care and confrontation. Although that is its primary task, the church cannot afford to neglect those political and economic systems and institutions which have done much to encourage the problems we are trying to solve. All of our attempts to beat out the fire may prove fruitless if we do not also apprehend the fellow who keeps pouting gas upon the flames. I agree with Barbour that, "Perhaps the shift to simpler life-styles must start with individuals, but a reordering of national priorities and policies is needed for effective resource conservation."<sup>31</sup> The church has a duty to carefully examine and confront the false assumptions and destructive realities of our modern capitalist economy. The church must call for serious economic rethinking on such issues as our economic dependence upon the human acquisitive drive, our understanding of work and leisure, and the question of what constitutes human need.

I have already shown that our modern economy actively encourages the acquisitive drive. I have shown

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<sup>31</sup>Barbour, p. 30.

its spiraling effect and the human destruction and enslavement to mammon which has resulted. Yet, in addressing this issue it is much too naive to simply condemn capitalism and call for a completely non-acquisitive economy. Unlike individual deeds, systems and institutions can never be either-or actualities and still function. In order to work, systems can only be approximations of human ideals. In our case, it is simply impossible to envision an economic system based totally on non-acquisitive motives. As Seifert points out, "It is hard to get dishes washed even in an idealistic commune."<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, any attempt to suddenly switch our economy from one extreme to the other would be disaster: "If we were to begin to rely completely on non-acquisitive motives, the wheels of industry would grind to a halt before tomorrow morning."<sup>33</sup> Instead, what we must do is attempt to move our capitalist system toward a closer approximation of the ideals expressed in our New Testament texts; we must push toward legislation which encourages less economic reliance upon the acquisitive drive and much greater dependence upon and stimulation towards less self-serving motives.

Although such legislation must necessarily take many forms, it seems to me that a very significant move in

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<sup>32</sup>Seifert, p. 67.      <sup>33</sup>Ibid.

the right direction would involve legislation encouraging the economic sector to move away from an emphasis on private goods and toward an emphasis upon public services. Liberal economists have long cried out against the presence of "private affluence and public squalor" in America, a situation very well described by Galbraith:

The family which takes its mauve and cerise, air-conditioned, power-steered and power-braked automobile out for a tour passes through cities that are badly paved, made hideous by litter, blighted buildings, billboards and posts for wires that should long since have been put under-ground. They pass on into a countryside that has been rendered largely invisible by commercial art. (The goods which the latter advertise have an absolute priority in our value system. Such aesthetic considerations as a view of the countryside accordingly come in second. On such matters, we are consistent.) They picnic on exquisitely packaged food from a portable icebox by a polluted stream and go on to spend the night at a park which is a menace to public health and morals. Just before dozing off on an air mattress, beneath a nylon tent, amid the stench of decaying refuse, they may reflect vaguely on the curious unevenness of their blessings. Is this, indeed, the American genius?<sup>34</sup>

Such a move away from the production of privately owned goods to the renderence of public services would have several advantages. First of all, such services are badly needed. Second, one would hope that such a shift might be accompanied by a parallel shift of emphasis away from economic dependence upon and encouragement of the human need to consume. Finally, such a shift could concievably take

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<sup>34</sup>Galbraith, pp. 198-199.

place without destroying the number of available jobs for people and in fact could offer them work which more closely resembles meaningful service to God than mammon. Instead of making electric can-openers and butter-up corn poppers persons could work in needed areas like health, education, public safety, and environmental improvement. Galbraith has suggested that one way of making the shift from private goods to public services would be to inflict a heavy sales tax upon privately produced goods, using the income to finance public services.<sup>35</sup> Serious consideration should be given to this idea, as well as to other alternatives.

The whole issue of work and leisure is one which has been seriously misunderstood in present economic thinking. As I have shown, present economic thought considers work to be a chore, to be finished as quickly as possible so that one might enjoy leisure. Morgan suggests that we usually think of work as where we make money and leisure as where we spend it.<sup>36</sup> Leisure is when we consume what we have "earned". Leisure is loafing, goofing-off, time-off, escape.

Such an understanding slanders both work and leisure. Our texts have revealed the real place of work, not as a means to consumption, but as the most important

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 239.

<sup>36</sup>Morgan, p. 250.

need of all, in-so-far as it enables human beings to faithfully serve God. One of the primary tasks for the modern economist must be to re-examine an economic philosophy which begins not with the human need to work, but with the human need to consume. Schumacher concurs:

Above anything else there is a need for a proper philosophy of work which understands work not as that which it has indeed become, an inhuman chore as soon as possible to be abolished by automation, but as something 'decreed by Providence for the good of man's body and soul.' Next to the family, it is work and the relationships established by work that are the true foundations of society.<sup>37</sup>

Leisure, too, must be understood anew. It is not goofing-off or loafing. Rather, the root of leisure is "to be permitted," and its primary connotation is that of freedom, the freedom to choose one's activity.<sup>38</sup> Hence, leisure and work are not necessarily opposites, nor is leisure purely a consumptive state. On the contrary, because of the degree of choice involved, leisure may afford the individual his/her most meaningful opportunities for exciting participation in God's own work upon the earth.

Finally, the church must demand that economists re-evaluate the question of what constitutes human need. Many liberal economists are finally pointing out the

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<sup>37</sup>Schumacher, p. 37.

<sup>38</sup>Morgan, p. 242.

inadequacies of our current economic measurement of "standard of living" -- G.N.P. Gross National Product measures only quantitative growth, whereas an accurate measure of "standard of living" should include qualitative considerations as well. Hence liberal economists point to such things as cultural and intellectual growth, leisure time, health, political freedom, and justice as factors which must be considered in any estimate of "standard of living". While the liberal economists are to be commended in this counsel, it seems to me that they do not go far enough. Nowhere do they suggest that "standard of living" should include what, according to our New Testament texts, is the greatest human need -- meaningful work in the form of service. And, with few exceptions, no one has suggested the obvious conclusion that, for Americans, the greatest leap in "standard of living" could be obtained simply by doing without, by lowering our commonly accepted levels of need. In all of my reading for this project, only Mesarovic and Pestal suggest that American "standard of living" might rise if we consumed less:

Those of us who live in the Developed World have, we are told, the highest standard of living the world has ever known. That assertion is made in reference to the material goods we possess. But if we knowingly consume less energy, if we deliberately own fewer goods, if we consciously simplify our lives just a little so that others may have only the minimal goods and food to stay alive, then what, really, will

happen to our standard of living? Won't the standard -- the moral standard -- really rise?<sup>39</sup>

It is time for us as affluent Americans and as Christians to take seriously the ancient wisdom which has been preserved in the three New Testament texts, Matthew 6:19-21, 6:24, and 6:25-34. It is time that we considered once again our true needs and our true source of nourishment. It is time that we asked ourselves, "What do we most need to live?"

If one takes a minimum subsistence level of consumer goods and certain other values as essential to the desirable quality of human life, what about Jesus Christ, the Son of Man who had nowhere to lay his head, whose life-expectancy was sub-standard, who was a victim of the gravest injustice, and who yet lived a life that was not only fully human, but is regarded by Christians as in some sense normative for all human existence?<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Mihajlo Mesarovic and Eduard Pestel, Mankind at the Turning Point (New York: New American Library, 1974), p. 141.

<sup>40</sup>"Quality of Life -- Criteria for Measurement," Dossier, Section VI, 5th Assembly, World Council of Churches, Jakarta, 1975.

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